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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY USSR (Ukraine)

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SUBJECT

Suppression of Churches in the Western Ukraine

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SUPPLEMENT

ORIGIN

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1. Until 1945, the Soviets were correct in claiming that they did not bother the church, the clergy, or religious ceremonies in the Western Ukraine. However, 1945 marked the beginning of anti-church agitation and persecution of leading churchmen. The first anti-church articles appeared in the Lvov paper, Free Ukraine, and were followed by police troop attacks on the Metropolitan's palace and other incidents. On 9 May 1945, all bishops and assistants in Galicia were arrested, incarcerated in Lvov, and held incommunicado. Theological students were arrested and taken to Belaya Tserkov; the younger ones were sent home and the others were enrolled in the Army. Two priests were murdered in the Lvov area.
2. In an attempt by the Soviets to eliminate the Greek Catholic Church, a "Group for the Merger of the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches" was founded on 28 May 1945. Founders of the group were: Dr. Gabriel Kostelnik of Lvov, a Greek Catholic priest; Dr. Mikhail Melnik, pastor of Nyshankovichi (sic); and Antonii Pelvetzki, city chaplain of Kopychyntse. Secretary of the organization was Sergei Khrutskii. The group was officially recognized by the Soviet Government.
3. The group called a congress of bishops. Since all Greek Catholic bishops had been arrested, new ones were appointed by Patriarch Aleksii. On 24 and 25 February 1946 in Kiev, Antonii Pelvetzki was made Bishop of Stanislaw and Dr. Melnik Bishop of Przemysl-Drogobych-Sambor. Malcarii had been made Bishop of Lvov and Tarnopol in April 1945. Comment: See [redacted] for these three bishops.) At the congress, attended by 216 priests and 19 laymen but not attended by the opposition, the following resolutions were passed:

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1. Annulment of the Berest Union of 1596.
2. Separation from the Church of Rome.
3. Return to the Orthodox Ancestral Church.
4. Merger with the old Russian Orthodox Churches in the Soviet Union.

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4. Heavy pressure was exerted by the NKGB on priests to join the new church. An NKGB representative for Church matters, whose task was to supervise church services, was appointed for the area. Many priests fled, were deported, or retired to civilian life. The result was that hardly any priests were left. The new Orthodox Church was boycotted by the population.
5. Anti-church action was undertaken against monks also. The monastery of the Order of Redemptionists, located in the suburbs of Lvov, was seized by the government and the monks were forbidden to hold services. In addition, all branch monasteries of the Redemptionists were confiscated except the Holosko Monastery near Lvov, which the order was allowed to retain. Convents also were disbanded. The nuns, however, continued to circulate as nurses in the Carpatho-Ukraine, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland and brought useful information back from their travels.
6. On 1 May 1946, there were sixty priests in Lvov who had not joined the Orthodox Church. In September 1946, they were ordered to register with the authorities.
7. In the fall of 1946, courses were started in Pochayev-Volhynian (sic) for the education of new Orthodox priests for Galicia. Eighty percent of the Volhynian priests of the opposition were arrested.
8. Also in the fall of 1946, a trial was instigated in Kiev against the Greek Catholic archbishops. Slipii, Metropolitan of Lvov, was sentenced to eight years in prison. The Bishop of Stanislaw, Choryshin, died in the Kiev prison. The prelate Kunitzkii and the priest Galland died in the Lvov prison. In August 1946, Metropolitan Slipii wrote to Lvov from his exile in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, that he was working in a tractor factory picking wool (sic). Abbot Klemens Sheptytzkii was forbidden residence in Lvov and now lives in the Uhniv Cloister. The Abbess of the Studite Order was sentenced to twenty years in prison.
9. A similar fate befell the Roman Catholic Church in Lvov. The Roman Catholic Archbishop, Twardovski, was deported to Poland, and the Roman Catholic churches were closed.

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